

Larissa B. Harper

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Objective

To work with team members, while providing leadership, as Executive Director of Downtown Salisbury, Inc. to enhance the overall appearance and economic development vitality of the downtown area for the City of Salisbury.

Qualifications

My work through the years in real estate development, having been a small business owner, as well as the interpersonal skills I use every day to interact with a wide range of individuals, all uniquely qualify me to fulfill the duties as Executive Director of Downtown Salisbury, Inc.

Professional Experience

Downtown Business Specialist, City of Willson Planning & Community Revitalization Dept. 2012 – Present

- In-kind city staff for two non-profit agencies providing assistance with property development of vacant/underutilized buildings, both public and privately owned, procuring developers and investors
- Work with city legal counsel to create and execute complex Public/Private Development Agreements
- Assisted in various ways with small and large property development projects over 5 years:
 - \$400,000 of individual property sales (8 properties) between years 2014 to 2016
 - \$800,000 development of 120 Goldsboro Street, S. in 2013-14 (Wilson Furniture Company Lofts)
 - \$1.5 Million development of 315 Nash Street, E. in 2012-14 (Nash Street Lofts)
 - \$4 Million development of 209-217 South St. in 2013-16 (217 Brew Works & adjacent buildings)
 - \$12 Million development of historic tobacco warehouse in progress (Whirligig Station)
- Through contract with the City of Willson, partner with the UNC School of Government's Development Finance Initiative staff to analyze the downtown district, find the next avenues for growth, and tools for investors
- Facilitate meetings between business owners, property owners, and city staff in all departments
- Write and Administer Grants on the Federal, State, and local level:
 - \$1.2 Million of Federal Economic Initiative Special Projects grants
 - \$96,700 in Municipal Service District grants to date
 - \$50,000 Department of Commerce Building Reuse Grant
 - Assisted in creating terms and process for City & County Tax Grant for improvements >\$400K
- Manage and implement Strategic Action Plan for Economic Development Committee for Willson Downtown Development Corp. (WDDC), a 509a1; charged with administering MSD funding of approx. \$75,000
- Negotiate Contracts, perform admin & financial reporting duties for Willson Downtown Properties, Inc., a 501c3
- Assist in updating and continuing to improve city ordinances and codes pertaining specifically to sidewalk dining, alcohol consumption, food truck management, and new issues facing growing downtowns
- Communicate and coordinate meetings regarding streetscape and other public improvements to and from downtown business owners and public works departments
- Business recruitment for vacant and underutilized properties through various methods and partnerships
- Offer retention assistance and resources for existing businesses located within Municipal Service District
- Prove through tours Vollis Simpson Whirligig Park (in progress) is catalyst and art equals economic development



- Originally co-managed, now only assist with presenting to Independently operated Downtown Commerce Group (informal merchants association)
- Work Downtown Sponsored events and attend partnered events when possible
- As Departmental Customer Service Team member for City of Wilson, collaborated with other team members to create and implement a 8 month program, "Lunch & Learn", addressing employee dissatisfaction in the areas of morale, inter-personal relationships, external and Internal customer services; as a result, the Planning & Development Departments instituted my suggestion of "6-month Check Ins", as a bi-annual employee initiated session to update their supervisor as to where they stand on their workload, where they may need assistance, what work has been completed and what is on the horizon. This helps to stay on track before their annual review which is tied to merit raises.

Executive Director, Kernersville Downtown Preservation & Development Council, Inc.

2010 – 2012

- As the sole staff member of this 501c3, expanded the role of KDPDC to create an advocate organization for businesses within the downtown area of Kernersville, NC, which did not have a Municipal Service District
- Developed and implemented strategic plan in conjunction with a 16 member volunteer Board of Directors, several committees and other community organizations in order to fulfill KDPDC's mission *"to develop and promote a positive plan that will strengthen and enhance the downtown area, preserve its heritage, and foster a healthy economic climate for the entire community"*
- Attended two NC Main Street conferences, encouraged Board of Directors to participate in the Main Street model, although this organization was not accredited nationally nor through the NC Main Street Center
- Created and sustained relationships that led to positive merchant support, sponsorships and donations
- Facilitated monthly collaborative meeting of merchants and interested members of public, board members
- Liaison between town officials and downtown business and property owners to relay concerns, resolve issues
- Connected commercial tenants to property owners/agents in downtown district, including a mixed-use rehab project of former cotton/hosiery mill, later Hooker furniture plant, called "The Factory" (condos/retail/office)
- First point of contact for downtown event and street closure requests in various locations of downtown
- Gathered data for town planning studies and worked with various town staff on joint projects
- Coordinated downtown marketing efforts through multiple media outlets, created cross-marketing campaigns
- Managed and promoted the town branding campaign from legal documentation to media and promo campaigns
- Assisted in developing 5-year plan and fundraising campaigns to renovate the town's historic 1873 train depot
- Wrote monthly article for newspaper, created first monthly e-newsletter and social marketing campaigns.
- Created income-producing, long-term projects and secured grants to raise funds for the organization's projects
- Purchased promotional products, managed merchandise sales in-house and through website via Pay-Pal
- Assist with largest town event (25,000 ppl), as well as created and managed small events (25ppl to 4,000 ppl)
- Other duties included daily accounting, producing budgets, financial reports, minutes, and agendas for board and committees, and presenting to civic clubs and other community organizations

Owner/Independent Contractor, Real Estate Brokerage

1998 – 2010

- Marketed and sold residential real estate in Davie, Davidson, Forsyth, Guilford, Stokes and Yadkin counties
- Partnered to establish two real estate firms in Davie county between 1998 and 2005 that represented residential & commercial clients, as well as managed rental properties
- Assisted residential developers with new home community design, sales, and promotions
- Connected clients with Triad area real estate service and construction contractors, city and county resource staff
- Brokerage duties: Pair properties with clients' needs, prepare and negotiate contracts, conduct research, analyze and interpret market data/trends, perform record searches, create and implement marketing campaigns



- Traveled locally and nationally to build relationships and promote Greensboro, NC as a prime location for education associations' national, regional and local conferences
- Generated sales and budget reports to be included in data and statistics summary for City of Greensboro
- Generated and distributed RFPs to find the best meeting packages from event venues and hotels
- Assisted in planning group events, coordinating with hotel and meeting space sales representatives

Office Manager/Membership Sales, Lexington Area Chamber of Commerce

2002 – 2003

- Promoted and implemented the Program of Work for the Lexington, NC, Chamber of Commerce
- Assisted Marketing Director with implementing and managing fundraising, member awards and various networking events
- Responsible for daily operation of Chamber of Commerce office, including first point of contact for public inquiries, as well as some A/R and A/P accounting
- Coordinated board meetings and acted as secretary for several committees
- Presented benefits of membership to business owners leading to increased membership

Teacher, Davidson County Schools, Lexington, NC

1996 – 1998

- As a lateral entry teacher, taught 7th grade Language Arts, Social Studies, Science and Math at North Davidson Middle School.
- Second year, taught 4th grade in the fall semester at Reeds Elementary School, then returned to North Davidson Middle School to teach 6th grade Language Arts and Social Studies during the spring semester

Education and Credentials

Wilson Community College Small Business Advisory Board Member	2015-2017
Leadership Kernersville Graduate	2011
NC Real Estate Broker's License	2000
NC Real Estate Salesman's License	1998
NCA&T State University, Greensboro, NC	1997
6 Credit Hours toward M. S. in Social Sciences/NC Teaching Certification	
GPA: 4.0	
Grand Valley State University, Allendale, MI	1995
B.S. Degree in Political Science—Pre-Law Emphasis	
Intern for two semesters, Office of U.S. Congressman Pete Hoekstra, Muskegon, MI	
GPA: 3.35; Dean's List 1994-1995	

Technology Skills

Proficient in MS Office Word, Outlook, Excel, Publisher, PowerPoint, Constant Contact database/survey/social media programs, QuickBooks accounting software, AS400, and various industry-specific database software.

****References provided on application and as per your request****